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MID-CRUISE EDITION

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Gator Times



USS NASSAU (LHA 4) — THE NAVY'S "TOP GATOR"

UFC ABOARD NASSAU
UNLEASHED!

Gator Times



30 years
LHA 4

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GatorTimes

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Marine Lance Cpl. Joshua Rodriguez, from Chicago, instructs Ultimate Fighting Championship competitor Mike Swick on the proper holding and firing techniques for a MK-163 Shoulder-fired Multipurpose Assault Weapon during a weapons demonstration given by the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit in USS Nassau's (LHA 4) Hanger Bay.
Photo by MCCSN(SW/AW) Jonathan Pankau



Greetings Shipmates, Families and Friends,

Nassau has passed the halfway point of her 2010 deployment and in many ways the most difficult part of the cruise is still ahead.

The backside of a deployment can be deceptively calm for the crew and the families at home. Everyone knows their jobs very well and are comfortable in their roles. The days seem to blend together and time seems to pass more quickly or slowly, depending on your point of view. Also, the average daily temperatures will continue to rise as we enter the summer months.

The next three months will be some of the busiest and most demanding in the deployment. We need to avoid complacency and fatigue while remaining focused on following procedures and doing things right, day in/day out.

Nassau has another month and a half on station conducting maritime security operations and deterring piracy off the Horn of Africa followed by a port visit, transiting the Suez Canal, the Mediterranean Sea and

Captain's Call

Capt. Ronald Reis
Commanding Officer
USS Nassau (LHA 4)



the Atlantic Ocean and finally the Tiger Cruise and Homecoming.

Let's make Nassau's Homecoming a day of happiness and joy!

Until next time stay hydrated and motivated!

CMC Corner



Shipmates, Nassau Families and Friends

We've marked another month off the calendar and we're now in the double digits until our return home.

Most of our Sailors and Marines are in uncharted territory with such an extended period at sea. Many of us had spent 60 to 90 consecutive days at sea on previous deployments, but not many of us had experienced more than 100. We now have more than 120 consecutive days at sea and counting.

Our Morale, Welfare and Recreation division is doing a wonderful job sponsoring events on an almost nightly basis. The command held two events to celebrate reaching the halfway point of the cruise. The first was a swim call and sports day in the Hanger Bay May 1. The second was a steel beach picnic on May 8 that included a Cinema at Sea movie on the Flight Deck and our second Morale Day (beer day).

The Liberty at Sea program has been such a great success that we've extended it for a second round and

expanded it to include our 1st class petty officers. The program offers each crewmember a quality day off while underway and gives them time to recharge their batteries.

We started the second half of the deployment with safety in mind, holding a safety stand down. Nothing is more important to us than bringing everyone back home safe and sound to their loved ones. I ask that everyone at home do the same and be especially careful with summer activities soon to be in full swing. We want everyone healthy and happy when we return in August.

To our support team on the home front, our Ombudsman and our Family Readiness Group, I thank you for everything you do for our families on a daily basis. To our families and friends, thanks for your continued support; keep those packages and letters coming!

Until next time, take care and God bless.

The Ultimate Fighting Tour Unleashed Aboard Nassau

Story & photos by MCSN(SW/AW) Jonathan Pankau
USS Nassau Public Affairs

The Ultimate Fighting Tour: Uncaged and On Base, presented by Armed Forces Entertainment, visited USS Nassau (LHA 4) April 28 and 29 while the ship was underway in the 5th Fleet area of operations.

The visit followed a string of tours and events supported by Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) Owner Dana White, Armed Forces Entertainment and Morale, Welfare and Recreation, in support of troops all around the world.

"We've toured in Germany, the United Arab Emirates and Djibouti in support of the military," said Mike Swick, a UFC competitor from Houston, who fights out of San Jose, Texas. "I love coming out here and rolling on the mats with the guys, teaching them close combat moves that may be useful one day. I think Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu and the Marine Corps Martial Arts Program (MCMAP) augment each other very well."

A group of Nassau Sailors and Marines get together almost every night and roll out the mats in the Hangar Bay for supervised MMA practice and lessons. A lot of the MMA enthusiasts who put the nightly practice and lessons together were able to spend time on the mats 'rolling,' a nickname for mixed martial arts grappling, and learning from the UFC fighters.

"Nothing prepared me for how approachable these guys were," said Aviation Ordnanceman 3rd Class (AW) Jonathan Flemming from Jackson, Ga. "They came out here to teach us and throw down with us, showing everyone how much Dana White and the UFC supports the troops."

Marine Staff Sgt. Wade Winfrey, a 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit MCMAP black belt martial arts instructor, assisted in coordinating the event with Nassau's Morale Welfare and Recreation Department. Winfrey said he will never stop talking about the time he rolled with the pros.

"As a MCMAP instructor, I tell my Marines it is essential to constantly evolve their close combat techniques," Winfrey said. "The UFC visit and the techniques the fighters shared with us will make our Marines stronger and highly motivated to improve."



Ultimate Fighting Championship competitor Mike Swick Jonathan Flemming, from Jackson, Ga., during mixed

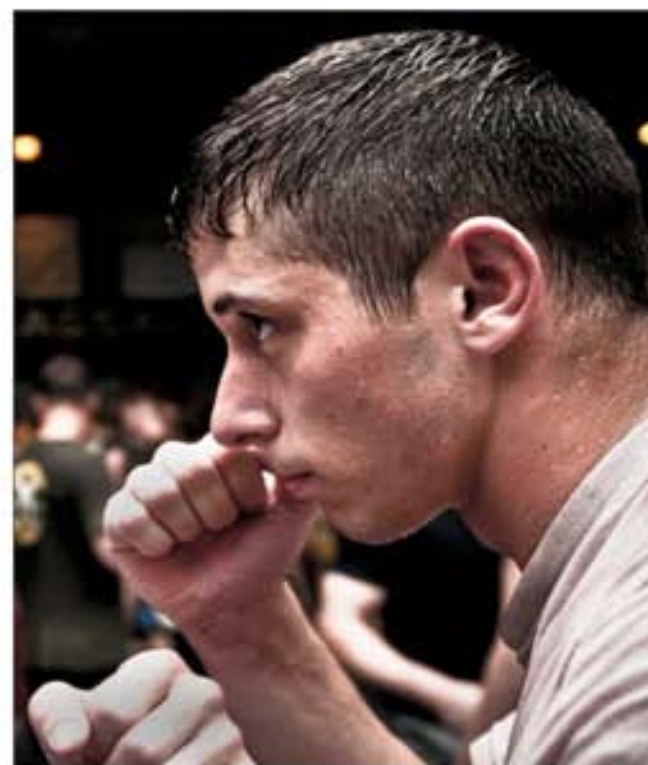
Chris Leben, a UFC fighter from Portland, Ore., who fights out of Oahu, Hawaii, said he's been teaching for seven years and his favorite thing to do is get hands on with the troops.

"The military has such a huge UFC fan base and Dana White realizes that," Leben said. "That's why he puts these events together. The UFC really has their finger on the pulse of the fans. Getting to see the passion the troops have for MMA and UFC is an unforgettable experience."

Airman Alana Leon from San Diego, said she enjoyed seeing the fighters in person.

"I've been coming out to the mats for close to a month now and I see all of the guys who really get in to MMA," Leon said. "I never thought being arm barred would be such a huge morale boost until the MMA fighters came onboard."

Swick said that besides teaching Sailors and Marines



squares off with Aviation Ordnanceman 3rd Class (AW) martial arts training in USS Nassau's (LHA 4) Hangar Bay.

on the mats, watching aircraft take off from the flight deck on the top level of the ship was an experience he will never forget.

"I've only been on naval vessels used as museums," Swick said. "Being on an active warship is mind-boggling."

The touring fighters participated in a gun shoot, ate dinner with the crew and received command ball caps. Swick said he learned a lot about the Navy and Marine Corps team as well as what life at sea is like on the trip.

"Coming out to Nassau and experiencing the best the military has to offer and leaving the next day feels like cheating," said Swick. "Spreading our knowledge — knowledge that might save a Sailor or Marine's life — is the least we can do. You guys stay out here for months away from family and friends and no one should ever forget that."



(Top) Ultimate Fighting Championship competitor Kyle Kingsbury looks through the scope of a M40A3 7.62-caliber sniper rifle during a weapons demonstration given by the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit in USS Nassau's (LHA 4) Hangar Bay.

(Bottom) Ultimate Fighting Championship Greg Thompson "rolls" on the mats with Lance Cpl. Patrick Muegge, from Houston, during a mixed martial arts presentation in USS Nassau's (LHA 4) Hangar Bay.

Nassau Takes the Plunge

Story & photos by MCSN(SW) Chris Williamson
USS Nassau Public Affairs

Sailors and Marines aboard USS Nassau (LHA 4) took a plunge in the ocean during a swim call held near the half-way point of the ship's deployment to the 5th Fleet area of responsibility.

Though this may be the first swim call for this deployment, it is the second time this year the crew has been in the water. The crew had the opportunity to jump off the aircraft elevator in the Hangar Bay or swim around in the flooded Well Deck.

The first Sailor to leap from the elevator into the water below was Nassau's Commanding Officer Capt. Ronald Reis. After Reis jumped off his own ship, everyone was welcome to jump in one at a time.

For more than three hours, Sailors and Marines took part in the swim call, and for some, it was the opportunity of a lifetime.

"I was so excited I got to jump off of the ship and swim around," said Electronics Technician 3rd Class Christine Duncan, of Richmond, Va. "That was my first time jumping in my whole Navy career and I look forward to doing it again this deployment."

Nassau's Executive Officer Capt. Samuel Norton said he also enjoyed the swim call.

"Of course safety is the number one priority for these types of events," said Norton, "But I believe the swim call was an enjoyable time for all. Even though I didn't partake in the festivities, I still enjoyed watching the crew have fun."

"We had safety observers, small boats with shark watch personnel and search and rescue (SAR) swimmers to keep the event safe," said Aviation Ordnanceman 3rd Class (AW/SW) Jonathan Flemming, of Jackson, Ga., one of the certified SAR swimmers aboard Nassau.

"The personnel that jumped in the water listened extremely well and swam immediately to the small boat to be taken back to the ship," said Flemming. "Overall, everyone had a good time and things went smoothly."

Following the swim call, a man overboard drill was held to ensure that all crewmembers were safely back aboard the ship.

"I think events like the swim call create lasting memories," said Culinary Specialist 3rd Class Nicholas Roby, of Louisville, Ky. "Doing the same thing over and over again at work tends to get tedious. I'm glad everyone got to take time out of their busy schedules to do this."



SWIM CALL MAY 2010



SEABEES CAN DO IN AFRICA

Story and photos by MC2 Patrick Gordon
USS Nassau Public Affairs

Seabees from Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) 7 have been lending their support and expertise to Camp Lemonnier and the surrounding communities in Djibouti since relieving NMCB 3 in February.

There are currently 118 Seabees from NMCB 7 operating in five forward locations including Moroni, Comoros, Dihkil, Djibouti, Manda Bay and Gil Gil, Kenya and Dire Dawa, Ethiopia.

The Seabees have been a presence in Djibouti since 2005. In that time, the camp has expanded greatly due to their efforts. But camp construction and maintenance is only part of the Seabees' job in the Horn of Africa.

"Our main objective here is humanitarian projects," said Engineering Aide 2nd Class (SCW) Gregg Morris, of Pawtucket, R.I. "Normally Seabees go on six month deployments, but NMCB 7 is currently on a 10 month deployment. I think we can really do a lot of good in the community with that extra time."

Morris mentioned that the current deployment is one of the longest that the Seabees have done in years.

"The result of the extended deployment is being able to see a project like the Kontali School from start to finish," said Morris.

The Kontali School is an 85 by 30 foot three-class room building in the rural area of Kontali, Djibouti.

"The current schoolhouse is too small to serve the student body of about 200 students," said crew leader Builder 3rd Class (SCW) John Waters.

"The students come from three separate villages in the area. When we're done, the extra building will help alleviate overcrowding in the classrooms."

Other projects under construction by the Seabees are more serious in nature due to their impact to the local community. In Naghad, Djibouti, six Seabees are building a water distribution site. When complete, the Naghad Water Distribution Project will be a 12 foot by 12 foot square concrete pad with 40 water spigots and two watering troughs for local livestock.

"The purpose of the Naghad Water Distribution Project is to provide a cleaner, more efficient water source to the community," said project supervisor Builder 1st Class (SCW) Joseph Waddell, of Harrisonville, Mo. "Right now, the people of Naghad only have a 26 spigot pad that leaks badly and creates a cesspool of standing water. When the Seabees are done here, the local community will be able to get more from their water source."

However, once a project is complete, the Seabees job is only half done.

"As Seabees, we really split our time between initial construction and maintenance," said NMCB 7 Public Works crew supervisor Steelworker 1st Class (SCW) Lynnette King, of Cleveland. "If we build a structure, it is under our maintenance for a year."

The Seabees are a highly utilized organization in the Horn of Africa area of responsibility due to their capability in a wide variety of engineering skill sets. This proficiency is particularly useful in more remote areas, such as Kontali.

"The Kontali School project is a perfect example of the 'Can Do' spirit of the Seabees," said NMCB 7 Detachment Horn of Africa operations chief Senior Chief Construction Electrician (SCW) Clint Rainey, of Summerville, Ga. "The Seabees are in such high demand in this region because of the construction knowledge they bring to the area."

See "Seabees," page 10



MA's Keep Prisoners in Check

Story by MC2 Coleman Thompson
USS Nassau Public Affairs

With the recent rise in attacks from pirates in the 5th Fleet area of responsibility, the U.S. Navy has stepped up its anti-piracy operations to maintain maritime security in the region.

Upon encountering a suspected pirate ship, a U.S. naval ship will send in its Visit, Board, Search and Seizure (VBSS) team to assess the craft and its crew. If they are suspected of acts of piracy the suspects are detained by the team, brought back to the ship and handed over to the ship's detainee team.

"Unfortunately not all ships are outfitted with a functioning brig for holding prisoners," said Senior Chief Master-at-Arms (SW/AW) Derek Oglesby, Nassau's Security Division's leading chief petty officer. "Luckily we have one as well as a team that's well trained in how to handle prisoners under control (PUC)."

Nassau's team recently held the PUCs from USS Ashland (LSD 48) and USS Nicholas (FFG 47) until they were ready to be taken into custody by the U.S. Department of Justice.

"Holding onto actual prisoners is an intense experience," said Oglesby. "We were all on pins and needles, but that tension keeps our focus and awareness up. It is definitely different holding onto actual PUCs than what we did in our training."

Prior to deploying in January, the security team aboard Nassau was certified by the U.S. 2nd Fleet's Afloat Training Group to handle PUCs. This training took place during several pre-deployment workups, including the Composite Unit Training Exercise and the Nassau Amphibious Ready Group's (NAS ARG) Certification Exercise.

"The training we went through really paid off," said Oglesby. "Our teams in the brig really held it down. They gave a stellar performance, even though they did have to go through their fair share of hardships."

With PUCs aboard, the detainee teams stood 12-hour shifts in the brig, sometimes in addition to their



Master-at-Arms Seaman Edward Bacon, from Gary, Ind., and Master-at-Arms 1st Class (SW) Joseph Sorrentino, from Bridgeton, N.J., practice proper inmate escort techniques on Master-at-Arms 2nd Class (SW/AW) Andre Geter, from Sumter, S.C., during detainee operations training in the passageway outside of Nassau's Brig. Photo by MCSN Jonathan Pankau

normal duties.

"It's been really difficult keeping up with this schedule," said Master-at-Arms 3rd Class Sharon Nickell. "It's been worth it though, to actually be a part of an operation that matters like this one does."

Cyclists Ride Against Cancer

Story and photo by MCSN(SW) Chris Williamson
USS Nassau Public Affairs

It's known as the race without a place and thousands of people participate. On May 8, two Marine officers aboard USS Nassau (LHA 4) took part in the 100 Miles to Nowhere program.

The program is an international event put on by Elden Nelson of Fatcyclist.com. The event is open to 500 registered riders, but more people can participate. It is set up like many other charity or fun rides, but instead of happening at one place, riders from all over the world peddle 100 miles at their own locations.

Participants submit an entry fee of \$95 and ride for 100 miles on either exercise bikes or a real bike. The profits go to LiveStrong, an organization established by professional cyclist Lance Armstrong to help people worldwide with their battles against cancer.

"It took us four hours, 49 minutes and 54 minutes respectively to complete 100 miles," said Marine Chief Warrant Officer John Merritt, from Parlin, N.J., one of the cyclists who took part in the program. "It took a lot of hard work and dedication, but this was a great way to give to charity and break the monotony of being out at sea for over 100 days."

Marine Capt. Jason Rubin, from Miami, said that this was a first for Merritt and him.

"100 Miles to Nowhere happens every year and this was our first time ever," said Rubin. "We are both avid cyclists and also big fans of Fatcyclist.com. This couldn't have come at a better time."

Even though the event requires the riders to peddle for 100 miles, Merritt said he had loads of fun since he was doing it for a good cause, as well as for the exercise.

"I absolutely enjoyed it," said Merritt. "It was the best day of deployment thus far. My thanks go out to all the support we received from our fellow Marines and Sailors."

Rubin also said he thoroughly enjoyed the ride. "Honestly, it wasn't as painful as I thought it would be," said Rubin. "We made it more enjoyable by putting some old cycling races on the television in the gym and had lots of supporters come out to cheer us on."



Marine Capt. Jason Rubin, from Miami, and Marine Chief Warrant Officer Two John Merritt, from Parlin, N.J., peddle on exercise bikes in USS Nassau's (LHA 4) gym in support of the 100 Miles to Nowhere program.

"Seabees," from page 3

We are very technically diverse in our expertise, which is a great asset in this region of the world."

"Seabees can do it from the ground up across the board," added King.

The Seabees impact on the community does not stop when they put down their tools. Many find themselves making a positive personal impact on the residents of the towns they work in as well.

"Sometimes in our downtime, we'll play basketball or soccer with the kids from the area," said Kontali School project crew member Builder 2nd Class (SCW) Carlos Vazquez, of Springfield, Mass. "It has really helped us to build ties to the community. It's great to be contributing to the development of the community."

Speaking on the Naghad Water Distribution project, crew member Builder Constructionman Selina Rodriguez, of Harlingen, Texas, summed up the sense of pride the Seabees feel about their contributions to the community.

"It's great being able to improve the lives of people, to give them something better than what they already have," said Rodriguez.

COMMAND ACHIEVEMENTS



ESWS Qualified

MCSN Christopher
Williamson
CTT2 Raynetta Bennett
ITSN Fausto Buelna
LS2 Javier Trevino
HMCS Christopher
Olinger
BM3 Joel Reeves
HM2 Caleb Medders
ENFA Donald Pascalli
HM2 Rebecca Marsh
ABH3 Paul Bria
ABH3 Joshue Chinbritton
OS2 Jonathan Mcelya

A03 Jonathan Flemming
SN Austin Treat
ABH3 Amanda Orefice
ABHAN James Spencer
CTR3 Evan Galloway
ABH3 Isak Bonyo
ABH3 Darius Branch
MM3 Mario Fernandez
MM3 Agnidoufel Pindi
MM3 Shawn Davis
CS3 Michael Griffin
CSSR Darren Mock
LSSA Luis Murguia
LS3 David Womba

ABH3 Corey Flores
ABHAN Eric Smith
ABHAN Elliot Sipe
HM2 Luis Saucedo
HM3 Joseph Williams
QM1 Joshua Clark
AZ3 Dave Mclean
BM2 Kyle Sweger
GM2 James Fletcher
LS1 Michael Lockhart
SN Travis Heidelberger
HT2 Travis Reed
HTFN Daniel Rafalski
CTR2 Christopher Norris



EAWS Qualified

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OS1 Tai Petties
MM2 Siegfried Wightman
ACAN John Ammons
ACAN Stephen Strachan
IT2 Douglas Smith
ABF3 Marc Simmons
RP1 Johanna Arocho
IC1 Salvatore Nacci
GSM2 James Harvey

ABHAN Yvanray Azucena
GSM2 Francis Sankoh
HM2 Jason Snider
IT3 Christopher Calvert
SN Tiara Green
HM2 Dennis Deguzman
HM3 Haniff Chrouh
HM3 Laketa Thomas
LS2 Daniel Shelton

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SH1 Carl Fortune
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OS2 Jody Ann Miller
AG3 Larry Pacquer
AG2 Justin Heatherly
AOAN Terrika Fields

